

# WORLD SERVICE CONFERENCE OF NARCOTICS ANONYMOUS

P.O. Box 9999  
Van Nuys, CA 91409  
(818) 780-3951



To: World Service Conference 1990

From: Reuben Farris  
Second Vice Chairperson

I want to open this report by thanking all those who have offered support and encouragement over the past year. Once again I am reminded how invaluable "one addict working with another" has been to me, both in my duties as second vice chair of the conference, and in my duties as a human being. Thank you for your care and support.

Part of my duties this past year involved membership on the WSC Administrative Committee and the Joint Administrative Committee, whose work has been covered in an earlier report. The vast majority of my time and energy was devoted to chairing the Ad Hoc Committee on N.A. Service, whose work will be addressed in a later report.

I was also fortunate to travel to Brazil with a couple of trustees and a member of the office staff. Two members of the fellowship from Portugal accompanied us as translators. The primary purpose of the Brazil trip was to determine if there were any major philosophical differences between the two separate fellowships of Toxicomanos Anonimos and Narcotics Anonymous in Brazil. If no such major philosophical difference existed, we hoped to open discussions as to how T.A. and N.A. could settle their differences and become one fellowship.

Toxicomanos Anonimos has been established in Brazil for several years, with the purpose of helping drug addicts. Some communication has taken place over the past few years between the leadership of T.A. and the WSO regarding the use of N.A. literature (which T.A. had adapted). In the spring of 1988 some T.A. members broke away from T.A., started several N.A. meetings in Rio and Sao Paulo, and then began translating N.A. literature. Subsequently, they experimented with different meeting formats, developed a service structure, and added additional groups in outlying areas all under the name of Narcoticos Anonimos. Conflicts soon arose between the T.A. and N.A. leadership, and a letter was sent from the WSO to T.A. denying them the right to print adapted N.A. literature.

While in Rio de Janeiro, we attended recovery meetings of both T.A. and N.A., partook of the Brazilian equivalent of "going out for coffee" afterwards, met with the leaders of T.A., and attended a marathon ASC/RSC/national service meeting of N.A. Although there was the obvious language barrier, we could still recognize N.A. members sharing their experience, strength, and hope. And a

service committee meeting in any other language still looks, sounds, and smells like a service committee meeting. (Except their coffee is much stronger!)

While there were some differences in meeting format and "control" between T.A. and N.A. meetings, no major philosophical differences were evident. We left hopeful that T.A. and N.A. would probably eventually unite, but aware that such unity may take some time. There are several strong personalities involved, along with some buried resentments and some bruised egos. However, most members go to T.A. and N.A. meetings alike and find the present division pointless. God willing, unity will come to them and they can join together with each other and with us to fulfill our common purpose.

Since I don't have much more to report, I'd like to take my time to address some of the problem areas I've observed during my past year's tenure as a conference officer. In particular, I'd like to address communication, funding, literature, and international development.

**Communication.** While we seem to be getting better with communication between various boards and committees, and with the fellowship, we still have a way to go. Some of the fault lies with us trusted servants. As we become absorbed by our various separate tasks, we may fail to communicate adequately with each other. As recovering humans, we also have our own personal shortcomings to overcome in terms of our communication skills, or lack thereof. Some of the fault lies with members of the fellowship who don't take the effort to read what is available (*Fellowship Report*, *Newsline*, etc.), yet complain that they're being left out. Some lies with the very nature of our service structure at the "world" level, and its fragmentation. Our multiple separate "packets" of responsibility and authority do not lend themselves to ready communication--rather it is a structural obstacle to communication that must be overcome with persistent personal effort.

We still lack a written vehicle to serve as a "political" forum for the exchange of ideas and the discussion of issues. Perhaps the absence of such a forum has encouraged the proliferation of "secret mailings" and "lobbying" that goes on. Such "back-street" mailings are unfortunate, because they take vital dissident opinion out of the mainstream of our discussions. It forces a dissident minority into the position of appearing as hot-headed radicals, and we easily lose what they have to say.

**Funding.** While we're getting better at projecting income and expenses and adhering to budgets, funding of world services remains a problem. The tasks confronting us, as an international fellowship, will require tremendous resources--personal and financial. These resources must be carefully and prudently managed. While emotional appeals for more funds could certainly be made, what is called for is something more basic--the education of our members to their obligation to support fellowship services. This can best be done by one addict sharing with another, something we should pass on to those we sponsor.

While our Seventh Tradition is often mentioned in relation to financial support of the service structure, I'd like to direct our attention to a more basic applicable principle--our Twelfth Step. "Carrying the message" takes more than a token dollar in the basket. Perhaps we can all start practicing a Twelfth Step as we reach into our pocket and decide what to put into the basket. Perhaps ASCs and RSCs can start thinking in terms of a Twelfth Step when they decide how to allocate their resources, as well.

**Literature.** I'm sure we'll hear a lot this week about our literature development process. Given the resources we've spent and the work produced by the process, it's something that certainly warrants our attention. My hope is that we can leave this week with our literature process opened to the possible utilization of any and all potentially useful developmental mechanisms. I hope we can free ourselves of judging the process so harshly that we become blinded to the product. Just as the literature needs of addicts varies from addict to addict (because of various backgrounds, or at different points in our growth toward recovery), we should be capable of utilizing different developmental processes to produce our literature. We should seek to be free of the fear that N.A. will be destroyed if we each can't exert our own personal control over the printed word.

**International development.** We have yet to develop policy regarding the relationship and responsibility of the WSC and the WSO to developing international fellowship communities. What body is responsible for setting priorities for the expenditure of our resources? How do we decide when travel to another country is warranted? Who should go? What our goals should be?

As "world servants," should we simply be sharing our experience, or should we be taking an active role in problem-solving? What are the boundaries of national autonomy? Is national autonomy a valid concept?

What level of financial support for developing N.A. communities is appropriate? Assistance with translation of literature? Subsidizing the cost of literature? Funding attendance at WSC? Paying rent for local meetings? At what point are we no longer merely reaching out to another addict, but instead "enabling" developing communities to avoid the essential act of self-support? Is funding an Arabic translation of our Basic Text any different than giving Little White Books to addicts in American prisons?

In the absence of established policy on international development, much of the decision-making falls to the WSO. While I personally think that their decisions have been good I'm uncomfortable with the situation of decisions being made on a case-by-case basis without established policy. I think the office is acting responsibly to fill the void left by our failure to provide clear direction.

With regards to these issues surrounding international development, I'm afraid I have more questions than answers. My hope is that as a worldwide fellowship, we can address these questions and reach some common answers, that we can act responsibly and provide our leadership with some general direction to guide their decisions.

I thank you for bearing with me as I "speak my piece." I also thank you for the privilege of having served as a conference officer for the past year. Thank you for your support. Thank you for your criticism, both kind and unkind. It has been a growing year for me. Thank you.